

# The Nation.

November 29, 1993 \$2.25 U.S./\$2.75 Canada

## The J.E.K. Files: New Answers, Spy Stories

MAX HOLLAND  
DAVID CORN

Closing the case? Opening hidden history. (pages 649 and 656)

### EDITORIAL

## TRADING PLACES

**R**egardless of the outcome of the November 17 House vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement, the battle over the treaty has provided a clear view of the ongoing fragmentation and reformation of American politics.

On one side, there is the ruling class (politely known as insiders): the President, ex-Presidents, ex-Secretaries of State, transnational corporations and banks, Nobel Prize-winners in economics, editorial boards. And, of course, the Republicanrats in Congress who agree with them.

On the other side, there is the best of the labor, environmental and citizens' movements allied with everyone from the Congressional Black Caucus to Ross Pe-



rot and Pat Buchanan: the radical left, middle and right—or, to use the polite description again, the outsiders.

Never before has it been necessary for an administration to make such an open call to its establishment friends; never before have the anti-establishment forces found themselves in such close company. By picking Perot to “debate” NAFTA, the Clinton Administration hoped to shift attention away from the unpopular treaty to the even less popular pseudo-populist. But pounding Perot is not the same thing as promoting a sound economic policy that creates jobs.

The push for NAFTA is part of Corporate America's ongoing campaign to dominate public decision-making; the resistance to it represents a temporary coming together of all those disfranchised by that process. The NAFTA vote tells where the current balance of forces lies; it does not end the struggle.



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Publisher, Arthur L. Carter

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*The Nation* (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by The Nation Company, Inc. © 1993 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, Inc., 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011 (212) 242-8400 *Washington Bureau*: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002 (202) 546-2239. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex. 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763, or call 1-800-333-8536. *Subscription Price* 1 year, \$48; 2 years, \$80. Add \$18 for surface mail postage outside U.S. Missed issues must be claimed within 60 days (120 days foreign) of publication date. **Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues \$4 prepaid (\$5 foreign) from *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763. This issue went to press on November 11. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

## EDITORIALS.

Policy *du Jour*

Having failed to devise a credible concept for the conduct of foreign affairs, the Clinton Administration has fired the State Department official least concerned with conception and charged merely with management. The fact that Deputy Secretary of State Clifton Wharton Jr., the particular scapegoat, was not only out of the policy-making loop but also the highest ranking African-American ever to penetrate the WASPy fastness of the department makes his removal even more reprehensible.

It's a bit like firing the maître d' because the menu is a mess and the soufflé falls.

The cooks spoiling the foreign policy soup this time are National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Defense Secretary Les Aspin, none of whom seem to have a clue about the historic moment in which they find themselves. The time is not unlike that transformative period nearly a half-century ago when a great conflict ended and nothing less than the reintegration of global relations was on the diplomatic table. Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, the United Nations, radical economic conversion and redrawn alliances were essential elements of the new for-

Altogether, the cold war mindset created, then perpetuated, the imbalance between Kennedy and his assassin by always denying political coherence to Oswald. When the scales are righted, John F. Kennedy tragically emerges as a martyr after all—a martyr to America's hubris, to its sense of omnipotence and immunity from consequences during the height of the cold war.

The profound costs to the Soviet Union for waging the cold war are often noted, but equally penetrating assessments of the costs to the United States are hard to find. Once Kennedy's assassination is understood as another defining event in the cold war, it becomes remarkably clearer that the costs to this country were not only economic.

Every nation is sustained by its own myths, which may occasionally collide with reality. But when a nation is gripped by a myth so divorced from reality—when some 80 percent of Americans refuse to accept their own history—that myth is enfeebling, or worse. In this instance, Americans are encouraged to feel nostalgic for a past that never was, to wax dreamy about what might have been or to be paranoid about their own government. None of these is a rational or progressive basis for addressing problems at home and imagining a different leadership role for America in a new world. □

## ■ THE J.F.K. FILES—II

# Secrets From the C.I.A. Archives

DAVID CORN

First came the movie. Then the cry, "Release the files." Now, more than half a million pages of newly released government documents related to John F. Kennedy's assassination are sitting in boxes in the National Archives, available to all who have the patience to plow through them. But don't expect the files to yield startling evidence on the premier national death. The assassination material is mostly familiar, and even contains papers that undermine some conspiracy theories, including the one posited by Oliver Stone in *JFK*. The real value of the new releases lies instead in what they reveal, through episodes not explicitly connected to the assassination, about the cold war and the Central Intelligence Agency. For the student of this hidden history, they are a mother lode.

The core of the collection is the 554 slim gray archival boxes from the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which in the late 1970s probed the Kennedy slaying, and fifty boxes of records from the C.I.A.'s personal file on Lee Harvey Oswald. For non-assassination buffs, however, the most fertile territory is another group of records the C.I.A. sent the archives: about sixty large cardboard boxes crammed with once-classified memorandums, correspondence, personnel files, cables and operations reports assembled during the House inquiry. There is no equivalent set of C.I.A. records publicly available. Their contents recount government activity

usually kept secret and not integrated into public history.

Because the House committee was examining persons, groups and events linked to assorted conspiracy theories—such as the potential tie between Oswald and anti-Castro activists—the agency rounded up papers on a host of subjects. The papers document a failed attempt by some senior C.I.A. officers in the 1970s to prevent the publication of case officer David Phillips's autobiography, which was utterly sympathetic to Langley. (The C.I.A.'s secret-keepers believed no information, not even of the flattering variety, should be let out.) One dispatch from the 1960s shows a C.I.A. officer boasting of how he turned a Miami-based American journalist into a propaganda asset. A memo reports that the agency monitored J. Edgar Hoover's attempts to intimidate Martin Luther King Jr. by threatening to release information on King's sexual activities. Other papers show that after three C.I.A. officers were arrested in Havana in 1960 for bugging the office of the Chinese news agency, the agency attempted unsuccessfully to use Mafia contacts to spring them from jail.

Many documents in the C.I.A. collection are censored, and thousands of pages have been withheld on security grounds. Nevertheless, the set overflows with material that illuminates absurdities and excesses of the cold war, provides a rare view of the world of intelligence and unveils portions of the secret past. Here are a few of those finds.

### The Case of the Mad Exile

Dimitri Dimitrov, a 29-year-old Bulgarian exile, headed a small political party in Greece in the early 1950s. He was also working with the C.I.A. station in Athens. Local agency officers, however, learned that French intelligence was attempting to bribe Dimitrov into becoming a double agent, and they discovered that their man was interested in the French offer. The C.I.A. hatched a plan to preserve its control of this asset. The station lied to Dimitrov and told him he was the subject of an assassination plot. Supposedly for his own protection, it placed him in the custody of the Greek police, who tossed him into prison. Six months later, the Greeks decided Dimitrov was a bother and demanded the C.I.A. take him back. "Since our people were unable to dispose of [Dimitrov] in Greece," an agency memo notes, "they flew him to Panama where . . . he was placed in a U.S. Military Hospital as a psychopathic patient. . . . [Dimitrov] is *not* a psychopathic personality." Dimitrov was locked up in the hospital for several months and, not surprisingly, became so troublesome that the hospital insisted the agency reclaim him.

The brainstormers of the C.I.A. needed to resolve this mess. They considered sending Dimitrov to a friend of his in Venezuela. But Dimitrov had become hostile toward the United States and its intelligence operations; freed, he might embarrass the agency. With that in mind, agency officers weighed what they termed the "Artichoke" approach—using drugs and hypnotism "to see if it would be possible to re-orient [Dimitrov] favorably toward us." If that failed, the agency might try to induce total amnesia in Dimitrov with electroshock treatments. But C.I.A. higher-ups nixed the reprogramming. Dimitrov was removed from the hospital and incarcerated at Fort Clayton, Panama, for three years. He then was returned

to Greece and later permitted to enter the United States.

In 1961, Dimitrov approached *Parade* magazine with an account of his confinement at the hands of the C.I.A. An agency officer apparently squelched *Parade's* interest in the story by telling the magazine that Dimitrov was disreputable, unreliable and full of false tales about the agency.

Dimitrov captured Langley's attention again sixteen years later—this time under his new name, Donald Donaldson.

With the House assassination committee investigation in the limelight, Donaldson told a leading conspiracy theorist that he knew who had killed Kennedy. He claimed he had hobnobbed with Kennedy, Harry Truman and Franklin Roosevelt, who, he said, had made him a general by presidential decree. The "General" maintained that Kennedy had asked him to investigate an earlier murder plot and that C.I.A. operatives had been involved in the November 22 assassination. His unsubstantiated charges of C.I.A. connivance were publicized on *Good Morning America*, but it was pitiful payback. Dimitrov/Donaldson indeed now *seemed* a psychopathic personality. The true horror tale he possessed—that of the C.I.A. robbing him of years of his life through imprisonment and hospital confinement—went untold.

### The Case of the Unheeded Warning

On June 22, 1976, C.I.A. headquarters received a cable noting that an officer in the field had learned from a source—a businessman deemed a "usually reliable reporter"—that a Cuban exile extremist group active throughout Latin America planned to bomb a Cubana airliner flying between Panama and Havana. The group's leader was a baby doctor named Orlando Bosch.

That attack did not occur, but on October 6 a bomb exploded on a Cubana airliner in flight between Barbados and Cuba. The plane crashed into the sea; all seventy-three people aboard were killed. Bosch's shadowy network of exile terrorists claimed responsibility.

The existence of the June cable, which Langley shared with other U.S. agencies, prompts a few obvious questions. What did the agency do with the information it received? Did it further monitor Bosch and his group? The cable shows that the C.I.A., at least in June, had the means to penetrate the organization. Did the agency or any other part of the U.S. government bother to warn Havana that Bosch was out to destroy a civilian airliner? None of the documents in the Bosch file supply clues as to how the C.I.A. reacted to this tip.

Bosch was arrested in Venezuela days after the bombing, along with fellow Cuban expatriate Luis Posada Carriles. They were held there for more than ten years without trial and were then released. Posada went on to become a key operator in El Salvador for Oliver North's secret *contra* supply operation. Bosch, who claims his role in the bombing was never proved, returned to the United States in 1988. (Bosch had previously lived in Miami, where in 1968 he was convicted for firing a bazooka at a Polish freighter.) The Justice Department initiated deportation proceedings, citing a past parole violation, but the State Department insisted it could not find a country willing to accept Bosch. There are no indications that the U.S. government is currently pursuing his deportation. In yet

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another parole violation Bosch is now, according to *The Miami Herald*, organizing a group to raise money to buy and ship arms to Castro's foes in Cuba. Is anyone in U.S. intelligence watching his outfit today?

### The Case of Diego Rivera's Housekeeper

In the early 1960s the C.I.A. mounted an anti-Cuban operation of such sensitivity that Langley later refused to provide the full story to House committee investigators, even as it was turning over reams of information on other clandestine activities.

During the heady days of the C.I.A.'s covert crusade against Fidel Castro, agency plotters sought to exacerbate the tension in his government between old-line Communist Party members and other revolutionaries. One of their targets was Maria Teresa Proenza. In 1957, Proenza was housekeeper to the Mexican artist Diego Rivera. After Castro assumed power in Cuba in 1959, she became the cultural attaché of the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, where she handled propaganda. To the C.I.A. she was now a major enemy. One report describes Proenza as "dangerous . . . a cold-blooded emotionless woman who is nicknamed the Mummy. . . . She is also believed to be a lesbian." Above all, Proenza was a longtime, prominent Communist.

In November 1963, the agency's Mexico City station initiated an operation against her. The details are censored from the released documents—as they were withheld from the committee—but it seems that the agency may have engineered a way to slip false information about Proenza to the Cubans. She was removed from her post and recalled to Havana. A C.I.A. memo notes that the "first reaction to the operation inside Cuba" was the trial in March 1964 of a junior member of the Communist Party. This official was sentenced to death for informing on several Castroites who had been killed in a prerevolutionary police raid.

The connection between the Proenza operation and the trial is not clear from the documents. But months after the proceedings, Proenza was arrested along with the vice minister of defense and his wife, also old-line Communists. One C.I.A. memo crows that the earlier trial evolved—supposedly due to unseen C.I.A. intervention—into an attack on the vice minister. Proenza was sentenced to prison. After serving what was probably several years—the C.I.A. documents do not include this detail—she was placed under house arrest. Eventually Proenza was allowed to work as a librarian in Havana.

Exactly how this all happened remains another cold war mystery. It was a classic effort. Across the globe during the cold war, the agency endeavored to undermine foreign Communist officials via disinformation. In its strike against Proenza, the agency slyly managed to cause the Cubans to lock up at least three of their own. It did so by exploiting, and encouraging, the paranoid and totalitarian aspects of the regime. A 1978 C.I.A. memo states, "The ramifications of the operation are extensive. . . . This particular operation continues to have considerable sensitivity."

### The Case of the Muffled Memoir

Winston Scott was an agency legend. He served as the lordly chief of station in Mexico City from 1956 to 1969—before

retiring and going into business with the former head of British intelligence in Mexico. He also began to work on an autobiography, provisionally titled *It Came to Little*. Scott was by then disillusioned with the agency, believing it had not done enough to combat Communism.

In 1971, Scott shared a copy of his manuscript with John Barron, an editor at *Reader's Digest* who was then writing a book on the K.G.B. It was a likely match, and Reader's Digest Press conveyed its interest in publishing Scott's reminiscences. Then, in April of that year, Scott died. Senior C.I.A. officials who were aware of the existence of the manuscript—including James Jesus Angleton, the agency's infamous counterintelligence chief—rushed to his Mexican home to speak to his widow, Janet, and to grab the memoirs.

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## *Assuming C.I.A. operatives were sexually frustrated, the K.G.B. studied their sheets and towels.*

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In a cable to H.Q. the Mexico City station reported that one kindly agency official had advised the grieving Janet Scott not to read the draft because it related intimate matters pertaining to Scott's previous marriage. He persuaded her that the manuscript was the property not of Scott's estate but of the government, and that its publication would harm Scott's reputation. She agreed to cooperate with the agency and handed over all copies of the unfinished autobiography. John Barron, whose literary efforts the agency was assisting, informed the C.I.A. he would forget about the manuscript and that Reader's Digest would not publish it. "The book was not in publishable form," Barron says today, "and I had told Scott we would have to have clearance from the C.I.A."

Janet Scott also allowed an agency officer to rifle through her husband's study, which contained safes, file cabinets and valises filled with classified documents and tapes Scott had retained. (The pliant widow hid the officer from a lawyer for Scott's estate, who dropped by during the search.) The C.I.A. hauled away the material. "We have found [the] Huey Newton and [Eldridge] Cleaver tapes, but these [are the] only tapes so far," the Mexico City station informed headquarters, in a likely reference to an eavesdropping operation against the Black Panthers. In one of the safes, the C.I.A. man discovered a locked box. "We suspect," his cable said, "this may contain missing tapes on [deleted] case and 'lesbians.'" Perhaps this was an allusion to the Proenza affair. Or perhaps the Mexico City station had a roster of lesbian-related operations.

The only part of Scott's manuscript that has been made public is a chapter that covers Lee Harvey Oswald's trip to Mexico City weeks before the assassination. (Scott suggests unconvincingly that Oswald was a Soviet agent.) Everything else has been kept successfully under wraps. A 1976 C.I.A. memo boasts that the C.I.A. "deep-sixed" the manuscript. Scott's son is currently attempting to force the agency to release it under the Freedom of Information Act. His lawyer

ought to examine the C.I.A. records that show how the agency wheedled the manuscript away from his mother.

### The Case of the Lucky Senator

In this case, an old agency file is of more than mere historic interest. C.I.A. officer Jack Kindschi composed a memo on August 10, 1973, about a conversation he had had with an associate of Robert Bennett, owner of the Mullen Company. Mullen was an unorthodox public relations firm. It provided cover to C.I.A. people around the world, and it employed E. Howard Hunt, the mystery writer and ex-spook who joined the Nixon White House's secret "plumbers" unit and helped devise the Watergate break-in.

Kindschi wrote that his source—whose name is deleted from the memo—reported that "Hunt early-on had informed Bennett of the existence of the 'plumbers group' as well as the projected plan to break into the safe of Hank Greenspun." The source was referring to a pre-Watergate Hunt plan to crack the safe of the publisher of the *Las Vegas Sun*, who supposedly possessed material damaging to Democratic presidential aspirant Edmund Muskie.

Hunt, according to Kindschi's source, let Bennett know that Greenspun's safe also held information that might concern billionaire Howard Hughes, one of Bennett's clients. Bennett checked to see if Hughes was interested in the safe job. He wasn't, and nothing happened. But the memo implies Bennett schemed with Hunt to commit a crime.

Bennett was questioned by aides of the Senate Watergate committee, and, Kindschi's source said, the experience left him shaken. Conveniently, Bennett's father, Wallace, was a senator. The elder Bennett contacted Howard Baker, a Republican on the committee, who assured his colleague that he believed in the younger Bennett's integrity and would see that he was treated evenhandedly. Senator Bennett then talked to Senator Sam Ervin, the committee chairman, and obtained from him a pledge that Bob would not be subpoenaed or grilled on national television.

Bob Bennett thus remained in the shadows of Watergate. In the years since, Watergate-ologists have wondered about his

knowledge of Hunt's illegal activities. Hunt, far from a credible source, has argued that Bennett initiated the Greenspun operation. Bennett maintains he did no wrong. He contends that Hunt presented the operation to him as a legal component of a larger inquiry being conducted by then-Attorney General John Mitchell. Last year Bennett said of Watergate, "I was never part of the mess. I was close to it, I saw it firsthand, but I didn't do anything illegal, improper or immoral."

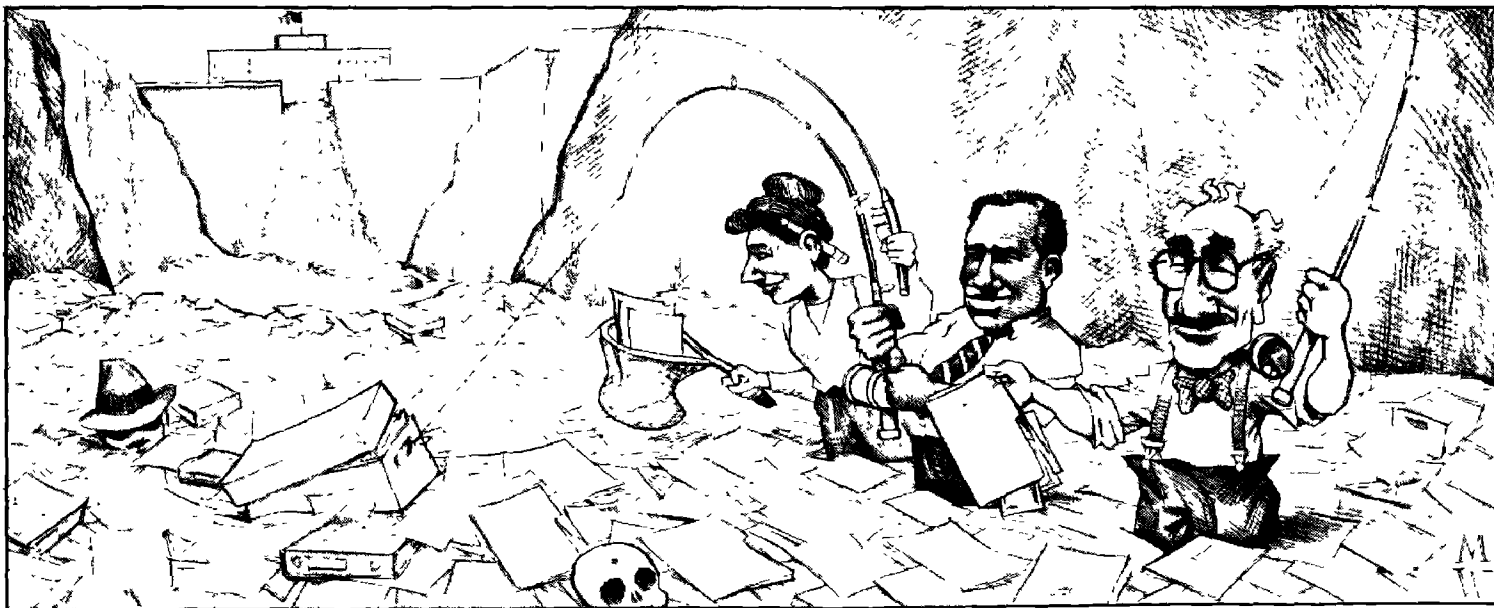
Bennett was running for the job of U.S. senator from Utah when he made that assertion. As a candidate, Bennett professed he was "appalled" when he learned of Hunt's plans to break into Greenspun's safe. His denials were effective. He won the election. The Kindschi memo suggests Bob Bennett was a willing participant in the conspiracy. Today he makes laws.

### The Case of the Laughable Denial

In 1973 Lucien Conein, a legendary C.I.A. veteran working for the Drug Enforcement Administration, was talking to Mitchell WerBell 3d, a scurrilous arms dealer who had associated with U.S. intelligence. WerBell told Conein that he had been asked to help arrange a coup in Panama that entailed the murder of its President, Gen. Omar Torrijos. The goal was to install as leader a former president who had served in office for only several days—probably a reference to Arnulfo Arias, a onetime admirer of Hitler and Mussolini who was elected in 1968 but quickly deposed by Torrijos and others. WerBell asked Conein to clear the operation with the C.I.A. He desired a guarantee that the United States would not interfere. Conein carried WerBell's request to the Washington field office of the C.I.A. An officer there told Conein that his information on WerBell's plans would be conveyed to the appropriate agency officials. But, he added, the C.I.A. did not engage in plots to overthrow foreign governments.

Conein must have chuckled. He was not someone to be issued the standard denial. As a C.I.A. man in Saigon in 1963, he was the U.S. liaison to the South Vietnamese generals who, with Washington's blessing, overthrew and murdered President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Torrijos survived whatever came of WerBell's plotting—if



anything. But eight years later he died in a plane crash that resulted in the rise to power of C.I.A. star Manuel Noriega.

### The Case of the Soviet Sheet Sniffers

The cold war drove spies on both sides to peculiar extremes. In early 1964, Yuri Nosenko, a K.G.B. official, defected to U.S. intelligence and asserted he had handled the K.G.B. file on Lee Harvey Oswald. The K.G.B., he said, had no connection to the assassin. But Nosenko had other sensitive secrets to spill. In the first days of his defection, while being shown around Washington by F.B.I. agents, Nosenko shared with his American hosts the clandestine techniques the K.G.B. employed to determine which Americans stationed in the Moscow embassy were spies.

Most C.I.A. officers are posted abroad under State Department cover. But the K.G.B. observed that a C.I.A. man was less likely than a genuine Foreign Service officer to accept an invitation to socialize alone with a Russian woman. The spy presumably feared a trap. The K.G.B. believed that by targeting Russian women against male U.S. officials, it could discern who was an agency officer. But tangible evidence was required. Operating under the premise that the solitary and more cautious intelligence officers were sexually frustrated, K.G.B. operatives gained entrance to the residences of the male embassy officials and studied their bed sheets and towels. If the Soviets detected signs of masturbation, they concluded the fellow was C.I.A. The results of this intelligence collection program may be available deep within the K.G.B.'s archives.

With the end of the cold war, it is time to reclaim history. Both the C.I.A. and the K.G.B. now trumpet their institutional devotion to "openness." Since releasing these J.F.K. records, processed in a short time by an overwhelmed office in Langley, the C.I.A. has begun re-examining the documents withheld, and senior C.I.A. officers say that at least 90 percent of those records will be released soon. The agency also has announced it will declassify thousands of intelligence estimates and analytical papers, and disclose material related to decades-old covert actions in France, Italy, Iran, Guatemala, North Korea, Indonesia, Laos, the Congo and the Dominican Republic. At a recent hearing of the House intelligence committee, Republican legislators complained the C.I.A. might be going too far.

The J.F.K. papers show that the C.I.A. can go further. The cardboard boxes at the National Archives overflow with the sort of records—cables, memos on operations—that the C.I.A. long has objected to releasing under the Freedom of Information Act. Langley has fiercely claimed that divulging such material endangers sources and methods, the lifeblood of an intelligence service. Yet here are tens of thousands of such pages, with purportedly still-sensitive information censored. And the agency survives.

Langley and C.I.A. director R. James Woolsey deserve encouragement for the endeavors to fill gaps in the historical record. But the C.I.A. brass should not be the only ones to decide which subjects warrant openness. The public should have a say. It can if Langley loosens the restraints it attaches to the Freedom of Information Act. The law allows the agency

to be exceedingly stingy in responding to requests from historians, journalists and citizens for documents. On its own or in concert with Congress, the C.I.A. should adopt a more expansive approach. "Release the files" is a call to be applied beyond the Kennedy assassination and topics of Langley's choosing. The ultimate significance of the J.F.K. records is the proof they offer of the C.I.A.'s ability to expose safely the dark matter of U.S. history. □

### ■ A DEFICIT OF IMAGINATION

## The Collapse of Canada's N.D.P.

DOUG SAUNDERS AND CARL WILSON

*Whoomp, there it is!*

*Whoomp, there it is!*

On the night of October 25, members of the Canadian Liberal Party gathered around a giant TV screen in a Toronto hotel, watching as results of the national vote came in. Each time a Liberal candidate was elected, the crowd chanted the popular rap refrain, celebrating a coast-to-coast landslide. *Whoomp, there it is!*

The world press picked up on the *whoomps*, which marked the Progressive Conservative Party's slide to just two parliamentary seats in a dramatic backlash against nine years of majority rule. But the chant was also a dirge for the New Democratic Party, the political vehicle for Canada's labor movement and other left or left-leaning forces. The N.D.P. suffered the worst defeat in its sixty-year history, getting less than 8 percent of the vote. The party lost all its seats in central Canada, falling short of the margin necessary to insure official party status for the first time since it began contesting national elections.

Along with its predecessor, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the N.D.P. is generally credited with bringing Canada universal health care, unemployment insurance, pay equity, labor rights and farm subsidies—even though the party has never formed a national government. Its collapse now, mirroring losses experienced by social democratic parties worldwide, threatens to shift Canada's political axis sharply rightward. The N.D.P.'s regress is instructive for all those in the United States who look hopefully northward for models of radical renewal by electoral means.

On the face of it, this should have been the N.D.P.'s year. With unemployment in Canada officially at 11.3 percent (the highest in any of the G-7 countries), social programs greatly reduced and more austerity on the major party menus, N.D.P. leader Audrey McLaughlin should have been the beneficiary of a widespread hunger for change. Not that her party was

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